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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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SEEDS OF STORY FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

GOING West to find the East! How strange to find ourselves travelling so easily on the route that for 400 years kings, wise men, brave soldiers, and gallant discoverers had yearned to find!

In 1534, Jacques Cartier, a Breton seaman from St. Malo, sailed up to Anticosti, never doubting that the St. Lawrence River was the high road to "far Cathay."*

We passed through the Straits of Belleisle into the mighty Gulf of St. Lawrence, having the shores of Labrador on one side, and the Newfoundland coast on the other. Weird and mysterious Labrador looked in its fog mantle. It is one of the few countries remaining unexplored. Last winter the cold was so intense that even the Polar bears were "starved out," and wandered down into the coast villages to prey upon the half-starved fishermen. A story is told of an Atlantic captain who, wearied by the innumerable questions of his passengers, gruffly replied to one who asked, "Is it always foggy here?" "How should I know! Do you suppose I live here?"

To us it was a glorious ever-to-be-remembered day of calm bright radiance. The Canadians were all in wild spirits as they breathed their native air. I ventured to ask: "Is it always like this?" and received the emphatic reply, "*This* is our weather." At Anticosti the river begins, or rather ends, about 900 miles from its source beyond Niagara Falls, in Lake Superior. I can hardly give you an idea of the vast breadth of that mighty river, and was not astonished to hear that some little Canadians on

* Tradition speaks of a Welsh prince who sailed thither in the 12th century; and of Danish sea-kings who made their way *viâ* Iceland 1000 years ago. When Sebastian Cabot (in the reign of our King Henry VII.) found the Basque word "Baccaloes" in use for cod-fish on the shores of Newfoundland, it pointed to earlier visitors from the Brittany fisheries.

board had asked, when they first saw our English rivers: "Are those *drains*, mother?" On each side were forests arrayed in the gorgeous autumnal tints for which the "Fall" in Canada is so celebrated; the wondrous crimson hues of the maples, and the gold and silver leaves of oaks and birches, looking like tropical flowers amid the dark sombre pine-trees. This is the Indian idea of "Jack Frost"—

The fierce Kabibonakka
Had his dwelling among icebergs

* * *

In the land of the White Rabbit.
He it was whose hand in autumn
Painted all the trees in scarlet,
Stained the leaves with red and yellow.

Longfellow.

Mile after mile we steamed; at first the shores were so distant we could not discern trees or houses, but further on we saw the white cottages of the French settlers, and close under the cliffs in the deep water many whales spouting, whilst overhead numbers of seagulls encircled us.

A little discussion arose as to whether this was the "Indian summer," or, as we call the return of warm bright days in autumn, "St. Luke's summer"; or whether it was not rather at Martinmas (Nov. 9), for one lady said it arose from the beautiful legend of St. Martin of Tours, who, on a cold, wet, misty day in November, was seated by the wayside so wrapt in prayer and meditation that he was quite unconscious of the weather. A beggar passed by shivering, and asked for alms. St. Martin took off his own cloak and threw it round the man, who then disappeared. But instantly the sun broke forth with wondrous warmth and bathed all Nature in the lovely "goldeney haze" which characterises St. Martin's, or the Indian, summer. The beggar, I need hardly explain, was our Lord.

On the third day, at noon (Monday), we sighted Quebec, the "fortress-key of Canada," magnificently situated on a rock resembling Gibraltar. The glistening Falls of Montmorenci and the rapids above attracted our notice, and as we neared Quebec we distinguished the citadel and the heights of Abraham, in the storming of which both Generals Wolff and Montcalm fell when the French and British fought for empire in 1756-59.

Two thousand six hundred and sixty miles from Liverpool

the steamer landed us at "the C.P.R. wharf," across which we walked to the cars of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is an extraordinary feeling stepping ashore on to a New World!

Quebec is like a quaint Norman town. The first street we saw was named "Place d'Orléans"; French is as much spoken as English. The waiting-rooms are designated in French and English, and French *calèches* (primitive carriages) await the trains. The laws are written in French, and though the province belongs to England, the governor is a Frenchman.

The early settlers in Canada were French, many of them nobles from the Court of Louis XIV., and the story of their discoveries is like a fascinating romance.

In 1642 Ville Marie de Mont-Royal (Montreal) was founded on the site of an Indian village by a company of noble men and women, who, fired with a missionary zeal for converting the Indians, ascended the river in three boats from Quebec. On landing all fell on their knees and joined in thanksgivings. An altar was raised and decorated by the ladies with shining festoons of fire-flies, and three tents were pitched, in which they bivouacked by the camp fires.

Soon after leaving Quebec we passed Champlain, called after Samuel de Champlain (one of the founders of New France), who discovered it, and, passing on, gave to the rapids by Montreal the name of La Chine, believing them to be the starting-point of the western route to China! The church at Champlain has two golden (gilded) steeples, which looked so lovely in the afternoon sun, like golden fingers pointing up to God. Somehow they reminded us of a sunny Saturday afternoon, when, high up in the Alps, we heard bells ringing in the valley far below—"Because it is Sunday to-morrow!" the peasants said. In other villages we saw silvery tin spires; how lovely they must look in winter, gleaming brightly as the sun strikes them, and guiding the worshippers across the vast sheets of trackless snow. As we watched the silver trunks of the birches, with their goldening leaves, we wondered whether the idea of these gold and silver steeples could have been suggested by them?

Try and realise the length of road we have to travel over in eight days from the Atlantic: In a ship 1000 miles up the St. Lawrence; in a train 1000 miles by the Great Lakes to Winnipeg, another 1000 miles across the prairies and valley of the Saskatchewan River, and nearly 1000 more through dense

mountains and over giant mountain ranges to the coast of the Pacific; and think for a moment what the "Canadian Pacific Railway" means: of the 46,000 miles surveyed for a possible route, of which a quarter was measured *yard by yard* through mountain, forest, and prairie, so that the two oceans might be joined, the dream of the ages realised, and the land of the rising sun brought within twenty-one days of London. Oh! how many have desired—yes, and spent their heart's blood and treasure to see the things which we see and take as a matter of course, and never saw them; but they toiled and others entered into their labours, and both pioneer and settler shall yet rejoice together.

Can you grasp the wonderful fact that the Dominion of Canada embraces 3,519,000,000 miles? and that this broad, roomy, vast domain belongs to the British Crown. "Dominion Day" is held as a grand festival by every loyal Canadian, in commemoration of July 20, 1871, when the great North West Territory entered into federation with Canada under one Dominion—that of our Gracious Queen.

The train is starting, its gigantic locomotive has an enormous lamp on its forefront, and a "cow-catcher" at its base (to turn off straying cattle), and a huge bell on its back, which tolls like some cathedral bell. The guard sings out, "All-aboard!" and we take our place in the Pullman—in American phrase, we "board the cars." I confess to a slight sinking of heart when we entered the car, in which we were to spend six days and nights, but after the first night we got quite used to it, and so interesting was every part of the way that we grew fresher and fresher, till when we pulled up at the "Terminal City," Vancouver, we would gladly have turned back to retrace that marvellous route, and fix its scenery more indelibly on our memory.

You can imagine how eagerly we looked for the first Indian wigwam, the first real canoe, the first log-cabin! At North Bay on lovely Lake Nipissing we saw the first Hudson's Bay store, with the letters H. B. C. (These stores, originating in the time of Charles II., extend right across the Continent and up to the Arctic Circle.) We heard delightful accounts of the Province of Ontario. Fancy fruits growing like weeds, and orchards with thousands of trees bearing enormous peaches! Winter is as charming as summer, with the clear still air, the brilliant sun-

shine, the tobogganning and skating, the sleigh-bells and snow-shoes, and the moonlights. One cannot transfer to paper the enthusiasm with which Canadians speak of their beloved land—nor describe their hearty loyalty to the "old country." If one speaks of "annexation" to the United States, they indignantly repudiate the idea. "It is the Americans who want it—not we; *they* have everything to gain and we have everything to lose by annexation."

During breakfast on Wednesday we had our first glimpse of the "Gitchee Gumee," the Big Sea Water, as the Indians call Lake Superior. It is the largest fresh-water lake in the world, so crystal clear are its waters that ninety-five feet below the stones are visible, and so intensely cold that if a ship founders the passengers have little chance, for they are instantly benumbed. The storms are wilder and the waves higher than on the Atlantic. Steamers on this mighty lake are a whole day and a half out of sight of land.

We had been told that until we reached the Rockies the road would be most *uninteresting*, but

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who *sees* takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

Canada is a veritable "land of brown heath and shaggy wood, land of the mountain and the flood." A curious feature of these "backwoods" is the innumerable blackened trunks which strew the ground like matchwood. These are caused by the forest fires, the terrific roar of which can be heard for miles, and the sea of fire must be an awful scene. Another remarkable sight is seen in the broad rivers densely packed with logs of trees, which have been floated down from regions far beyond, and just lie in soak till wanted. Canadians call these logs "lumber," and "lumbering" is a great industry.

"For every silver ringing blow, cities and palaces shall grow!
When ruddy rust hath gnawed the axe, a nation strong shall lift her head."

Crawford.

The gigantic forests supply most valuable timber; the endless rivers provide immense water power for the saw mills, which are busily employed in cutting up the wood beyond on that thousand-mile reach of prairie where no trees grow, for firing and fences

on the cattle ranches, the enormous bridges for the train, and the thousands of miles of sleepers. There are the settlers' "log cabins," and the "frame-houses," all of wood. The beavers build their curious two-storied "lodges" in the shallow water at the end of the lakes.

A fellow traveller informed us that there is "work, abundance of it, for anybody who will turn to and do anything." He had himself brought out 1400 of his countrymen to one of the industries he started. When he first came out he had taken ten days in a canoe to reach North Bay from Ottawa. He pointed out the beautiful blush on the rocks, and showed us those from which asbestos is procured, which, being non-inflammable, was used in old days for dresses by those who passed through the fire in the "Greek Mysteries."

"Thunder Bay" is protected by a sleeping giant—a table mountain called Thunder Cape. Port Arthur is built upon it, and there are large docks and a lighthouse, and fine Clyde-built steamers. Here we first observed the presence of Chinamen in the signboard "Chinese laundry;" here, too, we observed the trains marked "Canadian Atlantic" and "Canadian Pacific," and at the windows of the former the jolly faces of several blue-jackets from H.M.S. *Warspite*, the first instalment of those who will make this new highway to the Orient a military route.

Very early next morning we reached "Rat Portage." Our kind informant explained that the Indian gives natural names to everything, and that this place is so called from a colony of musk rats who crossed over a streak of land with their winter supplies to their home on the lake. A steep rock close by is named "The Rock that the Crow sits upon." The Indians are true children of nature, and believe in its forces as wise and good. It occurs to me that their belief in these natural forces is akin to the angelic ministries of our Scriptures. A poet has spoken of "angel hands offering cups of honey to tired-out bees."

Indians worship God as Manitou, the Great Spirit, and have a myth of the Deluge to this effect. Only one man escaped from the flood on to the topmost summit of the Rocky Mountains. The Great Spirit turned his lower limbs to stone, and the waters abated. But being all alone, he felt very sad, and prayed to Manitou for a companion. He fell asleep, and found on waking a lovely squaw (wife) beside him, made out of the rock, and to his joy his own limbs were re-vivified.

To know the Indian name is to know the nature of the locality, whether mountain, lake, or woodland. Steamships, they say, are the "white man's war canoes, which move by fire and make their own thunder." "Mine-hah-hah" is their expressive name for a waterfall—"laughing water;" "Niagara," the "thunder of the waters;" "Ohio," the beautiful river; "Minnesota," the sky-coloured water; "Mississippi"—their largest river—the father of waters.

One *depôt* (pronounced "dee-po") is called "Moosejaw," which is short for "the-creek-where-the-white-man-mended-the-cart-with-a-moose-jawbone!"

The Indian race appears to have been destined by the Creator to prepare the land for more civilised peoples; they slew the wild beasts, their fires cleared the forests. They are splendid hunters, and know all about birds, animals, trapping, and forestry. The woman hoes and farms, but the man despises agriculture. He hunts and traps the wild animals and brings the furs of fox, beaver, bear, marten, and wolf, and the buffalo robes to the H.B.C. All the traders of this company treat the Indians with perfect courtesy, and this is the secret of their successful dealings, and of the C.P.R. meeting with no opposition from Indians in its construction, as the Union Pacific Railway did in the States—where each Indian scalp cost the country \$100,000. The Missouri traders introduced small-pox into the unvaccinated Blackfoot tribes, which, with their horrible fire-water, a mixture of rum, tobacco, vitriol, and bluestone, has killed off thousands—a fiendish cruelty only equalled by the conduct of the Dutch in South Africa at the present day, who, to the entreaties of the natives to be protected against the introduction of these vile spirits into their "locations," reply that "as the Kaffirs multiply too fast, it is better to let the brandy bottle do its own work."

How thankful we were to hear that the Great White Queen, the "beloved Mother of the Red Man and his children," protects the poor Indians, and forbids the fire-water being introduced into the Indian Reserve. At the stations we saw members of the N.W. Mounted Police in Her Majesty's scarlet uniform, whose duty it is to board the trains and prevent the sale.

The squaw is the burden bearer; she carries the kettles, and the papoose, tightly bound to her back in its moss-lined cradle.

VERA.

(To be continued.)